

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

The present invention provides reagents for use in an automated environment for removing or etching embedding media by exposing a biological sample to be stained in 5 histochemical or cytochemical procedures without the dependence on organic solvents. The reagents comprise components optimized to facilitate removal or etching of the embedding media from the biological sample. The present invention also provides reagents for use in an automated environment for cell conditioning biological samples wherein the cells are predisposed for access by reagent molecules for histochemical and cytochemical staining 10 procedures. The reagents comprise components optimized to facilitate molecular access to cells and cell constituents within the biological sample.

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